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Gothic drama in Disney's beauty and the beast: Subverting traditional romance by transcending the animal-human paradox

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Gothic Drama in Disney's *Beauty and the Beast:* Subverting Traditional Romance by Transcending the Animal-Human Paradox

Susan Z. Swan

□—*In 1991, Walt Disney Studios released the animated feature film* Beauty and the Beast *to wide acclaim. In 1994, they set out to leverage their success into a new market: Broadway. By making overtures to domestic and international audiences with a musical version of* Beauty and the Beast, *they redefined legitimate theatre into a mass-market venue. In an attempt to understand what Disney has accomplished with this classic fairy tale, I will look at the animated and stage versions as examples of Gothic romance and argue that their success, like that of Gothic novels, is based on an openness to reappropriation by women. By taking advantage of the core paradox of Gothics, namely the paradox of our Animal and Human natures, this Disney tale can be read as an indictment of traditional gender roles and a validation of unconventional roles. It offers to viewers a model for intimacy which presumes that both partners must seek wholeness of Self before either can find wholeness in relationship.*

O NCE upon a time, in an animation studio not so far away, Walt Disney Productions created *Beauty and the Beast* (1991). It was called by many "the perfect film," and it became the first animated feature ever nominated for an Academy Award for Best Picture. By 1994, the film had grossed over $350 million in ticket receipts worldwide (Witchel, 1994). The Oscar and Grammy award-winning sound-

track has sold more than 3 million copies. The video sold over 22 million copies in its first year of release (Munk, 1993) and, as of June 1998, had sold 145 million copies. A sequel video, *Enchanted Christmas,* was in the top 10 in sales for 1997, and new audiences will be tapped in 1998 as Disney reissues the film with a song sequence added from the musical.

Then Walt Disney Theatrical Productions mounted a stage version of *Beauty and the Beast* (1994). It was "the most expensive Broadway musical in theatre history" (Witchel, 1994, p. 1). After 4 ½ years of performances, it still seats at higher than 85% capacity and is now the longest-running show at the Palace Theatre, the 5th longest running musical currently on Broadway, and

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the 20th all-time longest running musical (Lefkowitz, 1998). It was the highest grossing show in the history of the Shubert Theatre in Los Angeles, grossing over $56 million over 640 previews and performances (Evans, 1996, p. 75). It has had multi-year runs internationally in Melbourne, Mexico City, Osaka, Stuttgart, Sydney, Tokyo, Toronto, and Vienna and continues open runs in Fukuoka, Nagoya, and Stuttgart. In London, it was recently awarded the 1998 Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Musical. On National Tour, it has played in 1 to 6 month runs, with 8 shows a week, in 17 major U.S. cities and opens in 3 new cities during the fall of 1998 (www.disney.com/Disney Theatrical; www.columbia.edu/~zm4/ BeautyandBeast). By the end of 1998, all venues will combine for a conservative estimate of over 11,000 performances of *Beauty and the Beast* and well over 11 million viewers since its opening. Original cast recordings of the Broadway production as well as the Australian, Austrian, Japanese, and London productions expand the direct audience. Eventually Disney plans to make the play available to high schools and colleges for staging, which will exponentially increase its potential audience.

By any standard, *Beauty and the Beast* (B&tB) has been a wildly successful business venture for Disney and that in itself should suggest a need for a closer look at both animated film and musical. Even this level of success can't be totally attributed to Disney's marketing savvy. However, while many scholars would readily assent to the investigation of the film as an artefact of mass communication, many would challenge the study of the musical as such. But Disney's strategy to redefine legitimate theatre on a mass scale forces reconsideration. By making overtures

to a mass-market audience with a musical version of B&tB (and with ticket prices running from $15.00 to $75.00), the level of exposure parallels that of many conventional mass media venues. The total viewership of B&tB is about the same as the top-rated syndicated TV show, "Wheel of Fortune," and just double that of an episode of *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* or the top-ranked soap, *The Young and the Restless.* Attendees worldwide exceed the daily circulation of the *Wall Street Journal* or the *New York Times;* attendance in New York alone exceeds the circulation of all but the top 10 newspapers in the United States. Attendance is just less than the circulation of *TV Guide,* twice that of *Family Circle,* and 3 times that of *Sports Illustrated.* Only a single children's hardback, *The Poky Little Puppy,* has sold more copies (14 million) than Disney has sold seats to their Broadway show.

But why is *Beauty and the Beast* so popular? What happens in this retelling of a "tale as old as time" that allows Disney to leverage such a unique niche for itself, virtually redefining legitimate theatre to sit on par with movie houses? I will argue that in B&tB, Disney offers a story that allowed them to appeal overtly to audiences looking for traditional romance while at the same time subverting the dominant ideology, caricaturing traditional roles, and transforming the model for accomplishing romance between women and men. This subversion strikes a chord with many that are restless with the role models of the past, but unwilling to reject completely the social mythos of their culture. It offers a means of recognizing the paradox within which we live and offers hope for a romance between equals.

The stance that I take in this study is

a feminist one. My approach to feminism theorizes the human agenda as moving toward greater wholeness, recognizing the paradoxes of feminine and masculine energies, understanding the power and value of both, and integrating them personally and culturally. This approach is often associated with followers of the work of Carl Jung; Castillejo (1997) and Estes (1992), as Jungian feminists, are notable advocates of this approach. Love, as a process for potential transformation, is an important aspect of this model. Some feminists have rejected romantic love, seeing it is a "curse that lies heavily upon women" (de Beauvoir, 1949, p. 669) and "the pivot of women's oppression today" (Firestone, 1970, p. 126). Kristeva, though, argues that while love *can* serve as an instrument of the patriarchy, it does not necessarily do so. Love, she claims, "gives me the possibility of opening myself to something other than myself. . . . What I call love is openness to the other, and it is what gives me my human dimension, my symbolic dimension, my cultural and historical dimension" (cited in Baruch, 1991, p. 6). Recognizing this tension between love used to restrict and love used to free, and wanting to understand the appeals of love as romance to women, feminist scholars Modleski (1982), Fleenor (1983), Radway (1984), and Ellis (1989), among others, have undertaken studies of the texts of romance novels. They have found that, in texts as varied as Harlequin romances, TV soap operas, and Gothic novels, multiple levels of meaning allow for an overt adherence to a traditional patriarchal model of romance while also providing for resistance to this pattern. Baruch (1991) and Pearce and Stacey (1995) add analyses that look back at the love literature from the medieval era and forward to postmodern romances that rewrite, negotiate, or resist traditional romances. Extending their work on romance offers a possibility of seeing a new dimensionality in a Disney product.

Most critics of Disney products have railed against the company's commodification of sexist stereotypes as well as latent racist, androcentric, and homophobic stereotypes. Giroux (1993), Stone (1975), and Bell, Haas, & Sells' (1995) collections of essays typify critiques that castigate "Disney film as cultural pedagogy" of the worst sort (p. 19). A traditional reading would also fit with the literature which reviles fairy tales for promoting passive, subservient roles for women (e.g., Bottigheimer, 1986; Rowe, 1979; Waelti-Walters, 1982; Yolen, 1997). And, surely, the gender characterizations in most Disney fairy tales are distasteful. The girl leads (for women or heroines they are not) are submissive, beautiful creatures forced into distasteful circumstances. They are admired for passively accepting abuse and need to be rescued by and then wed to a handsome prince, who they barely know. Snow White, Cinderella, and Sleeping Beauty model this pattern. Jasmine (*Aladdin*) and Ariel (*Little Mermaid*) are hardly improvements. I would suggest, however, that something different happens in B&tB, that another level is operating which allows audiences to read the romance resistantly to find a model for entering adult relationships as a partnership between two whole Selves. The editors of *Premiere* magazine suggest the direction of this resistance in their selection of B&tB as one of 10 movies to best define the decade of the '90s, lauding it as "the first feminist Disney film, a liberated love story for the '90s" (Showalter, 1997, p. 63). Understanding how

this reappropriate takes place in both film and musical, and understanding the mechanisms through which such appropriation (Shugart, 1997) and oppositional decoding occurs (Steiner, 1988) seems a valuable undertaking.

In approaching this reading, I will take a two-pronged approach. First, I will contextualize the analysis by placing B&tB within the genre of Gothic romance, demonstrating how a seemingly traditional text may function as a site of resistance. The second prong of the analysis will be a close reading of film and musical to discover how the central paradox of Gothic romance, namely that of animal and human natures, frames the characters and then provides them with the means to transcend the very paradox that would bind them into traditional roles. Ultimately, it is the integration of dualities which allows the main characters to be transformed into mature Selves able to love from wholeness instead of separateness.

Reading Beauty and the Beast as a Gothic Romance

Defining the Gothic Romance

The Gothic romance, which emerged during the 1750s, quickly became popular with women readers and remains so today. The novels are characterized by (1) a dark castle or mansion, styled with looming arches and towers; (2) a young woman faced with a dark secret to uncover, which requires skills beyond the traditionally feminine—and who at some point flees in terror before she discovers her own power; (3) a flawed romantic lead who must be taught how to love; (4) a rival or alternate lead who turns out to be evil; and (5) a happy ending achieved through a process of redemption. His-

torically, these conventions allowed a female reader access to aspects of life that were "not supposed to exist" precisely because the plot called forth action in realms blocked to women. They also allowed a voicing of the unspeakable (such as domestic violence or rebellion against one's role in the home) with a possibility of at least imagining that one could act against these dangers (Ellis, 1989; Walker, 1990). The novels of Emily Brontë and Jane Austen best characterize 19th century Gothics while Daphne du Maurier, Victoria Holt, and Phyllis Whitney best characterize 20th century ones.

According to Fleenor (1983), there are two distinct forms of Gothics: the female Gothics and the male Gothics. While the male Gothics became the basis for today's horror stories, the female Gothics became the basis for today's romance stories, especially the historical romance. These Gothics were written by women and for women, and have "long been characterized by a kind of schizophrenia" (p. 4) that seems to represent the layering of conscious and subconscious levels of a woman's life as she strikes against the limits culturally imposed on her. The heroine is often characterized by self-division, experiencing loneliness and a metaphoric split of personality created by being "in conflict with the values of her society and her prescribed role" (p. 10). Another way of describing this social schizophrenia is to view it as the product of being caught in a paradox between femininity and competence (Farson, 1996). Gothics, thus, would seem to offer an ameliorative for such a paradox, serving as adult fairy tales that offer images of competence and meaningfulness to females in late adolescence (late teens and early twenties)

as the reward for successfully negotiating the challenges on the road to maturity (Mussell, 1983; Bowman, 1983). The appeal broadens to older audiences in times when women delay marriage due to family obligations or career, become available for relationships after being widowed or divorced, or find themselves trapped in meaningless marriages. According to Bowman (1983), the growth of the heroine is often linked to her ability to break with her parents. The mother, when she is present, functions as an "oppressive upholder of tradition–conventional and unadventurous"; in her absence, the community as a whole often stands in her role (p. 72). The father is either an "idealistic adventurer" who encourages her to be herself or else he is distant, remote and disapproving of her unconventional ways (p. 71). Bowman suggests therefore that the primary drama of a Gothic is an interiorized drama, with the characters being projections of the unconscious needs and struggles of the heroine and, by extension, the readers of the romance.

Testing the Gothic Form on B&tB

As with the Gothic novels, perhaps one element that allows for B&tB's multi-level readings is its female authorship. Linda Woolverton is the writer of both the screenplay for the film and the book for the musical. As such, she was the first female to write a screenplay of a major animated feature film (Gunkle, 1994) and is currently one of few women to have a play on Broadway. In addition, with B&tB, she builds upon the work of another woman, Madame Marie le Prince de Beaumont. De Beaumont's publication of the original *Beauty and the Beast* in 1756 in France coincides with the publishing of the first Gothic romances, suggesting that some of the resistant qualities of the story may emerge from the same milieu as the genre itself. The songs, which complement and forward plot development in the film and musical, were written by Howard Ashman and Tim Rice in collaboration with Woolverton so as to carry through her vision of the story.

A review of the story shows that Woolverton's characters are truly Gothic in nature. In both film and musical, Belle (French for "beauty") is introduced as an adventurous, bookish young woman who sacrifices herself to captivity in a nearby dark, mysterious castle (run by magical objects) to save her father Maurice from the Beast who is master there. The Beast is under a magic spell for acting beastly toward others; the spell holds him in animal form until "he could learn to love another and earn her love in return" ("Narrator's prologue"). Things do not go well at first and in reaction to an angry outburst by Beast, Belle flees the castle in terror. He rescues her from the wolves, she rescues him from the storm, and the relationship develops. Beast does learn to love. However, out of love for Belle, he releases her to return to her father, which means the spell cannot be broken and he (and those in his castle) will remain as animal or object forever. When Belle departs to find her father, she puts Beast in danger. She returns to warn him, riding her horse up the castle steps to reach him. She proclaims her love for Beast as he seems to die of wounds inflicted by Gaston, who is a spurned suitor. Her love to match his was uttered just in time though. The magic spell is broken and Beast (and the objects) are transformed back to human

form and look forward to a happily ever after.

Thus we have in B&tB the following key Gothic elements: a dark, gloomy castle; a young woman in late adolescence (Belle) who feels isolated from her community because of who she is as a person; a dark secret (the castle and Beast under a magic spell); a romantic lead (Beast) who is, literally as well as figuratively, a beast; a romantic second (Gaston) who turns out to be evil; and a process of transformation which must be worked through in order for the couple to come together in the end. The villagers serve as the upholders of tradition. Maurice, as an absent-minded inventor, fills the role of the idealistic father from whom Belle must break. The objects in the castle (especially Lumiere, the candelabra; Cogsworth, the clock; and Mrs. Potts, the teapot) provide Belle with encouragement to find her own way. Belle does run in terror from the castle, returns to discover her own power as a person, risks all being ruined because she has not broken from her father, and finally comes to term with herself and Beast to provide the final step in the process of breaking the spell.

Structurally, then, B&tB fits the genre requirements of Gothic romance. The drama of transition enacted in film and musical also parallels the genre requirements. The core story itself, unlike other tales that Disney has appropriated, is one that Bettelheim (1977) argues is aimed at guiding girls into womanhood rather than guiding children into girlhood. The film version, with Belle and Beast in their late teens, works especially well to dramatize this transition for younger audiences (up through late teens) by providing age-mate models. It also seems to be aimed primarily at girls, as the only character devel-

oped with any depth is Belle. Viewers come to understand Belle first through the eyes of the villagers and see that, while she is admired for her beauty, she doesn't quite fit in. She appears to be confident in this uniqueness, but this confidence (as in most Gothics) glosses over the discomfort she feels in being different. Later, viewers can see Belle's recognition of the changes that are occurring in Beast as well as her growing ability to see beyond his beastly exterior ("Something There"). The development of other characters in the animated version remains broad. Only single songs give insight into Gaston ("Gaston"), the objects ("Be Our Guest"), the relationship ("Beauty and the Beast"), and the villagers ("Mob song"). Beast gets less than this, singing only two lines in "Something There" to demonstrate his awareness that Belle sees him differently. Insights into his unconscious are gained in other ways, verbally through the Narrator's Prologue and visually through the disarray of the West Wing.

The musical expands the appeal to adult audiences. The addition of nine songs is especially important in filling in and even extending the Gothic framework as a site for resistance. Audiences are offered a deep insight into the interior dramas of Belle and Beast, as well as a final look at the resolution of the dramas ("Transformation"). With Belle, we are offered understanding of her relationship with her father ("No Matter What") and then her exploration of Self ("Home"). With Beast, our knowledge of his interior drama is heightened through three ballads that explore the more soulful aspects of his experience of growth ("How Long Must This Go On?," "If I Can't Love Her," "If I Can't Love Her: Reprise"). These additions would be especially

appealing to the adult female viewer who may long for the transformation of the male gender role in a way not often understood by teens. In addition, we get more insight into Gaston as the Shadow-Male of this Gothic drama. This Shadow-Male in Gothics, according to Modleski (1982), is presented as an alternative to the romantic lead, but turns out to be vicious or insane. Through the songs "Me" and "Maison des Lunes," we discover, even before Belle does, the murky depths of Gaston. His narcissistic villainy, to a resistance-seeking viewer, exposes him as a bully and as a chauvinist who views women as merely vessels for serving his creature comforts and who will respond with emotional and physical violence when his wished are thwarted.

In addition, the musical uses casting to heighten identification for adult audiences. The use of adult actors allows viewers to more easily project themselves onto Belle and Beast and thus more readily identify with their spiritual turmoil. This would especially open up the possibilities for a resistance reading by adult females, who are more mindful of the barriers to relationship posed by social mythos, having often bumped up against them. Another way identification is heightened is in the casting for international venues. In each non-U.S. venue, nationals have been cast in all roles so that, for example, Japanese audiences see Japanese actors speaking and singing in Japanese while Austrian audiences see Austrian actors speaking and singing in German. This internationalization has been so successful that Disney now offers a simultaneous translation systems in four languages for its New York productions.

Through these subtle differences, film and musical make B&tB available for active viewers of various ages to "resist, alter, and reappropriate" (Radway, 1984, p. 17). The question now becomes how does B&tB actually function as a site of resistance? How does it fit the psychological demands of the genre to provide for Belle's growth and empowerment and Beast's transformation so that their developing relationship transcends the gender boundaries represented by the villagers? To answer this requires a look at the paradoxes that underlie the development of the drama in B&tB and how the tensions that result are addressed and resolved.

Animal versus Human Nature as the Dominant Paradox

A pervasive characteristic of Gothic novels is the juxtaposition of the animal and human nature of the protagonists. This duality seems to underlie the dramatic movement in B&tB as well. In all versions of "Beauty and the Beast," the story turns on a prince who has been turned from human to animal; certain criteria must be met for him to become human again. The earliest literary version of the thread is the Greek myth of Eros and Psyche, with Eros representing the more sexual side of love and Psyche (Greek for "soul") the more spiritual side. The thread appears in fairy tales as the animal groom tales. These animal grooms typically "make life unpleasant for many female protagonists, but turn out to be gentleman or princes in disguise" (McGlathery, 1991, p. 71). McGlathery (1991) and Bettelheim (1977) suggest this symbolism may represent the subconscious fears of a maiden as projected onto potential husbands. McGlathery points out the importance of distinguishing the animal groom motif from what he calls "the real fairy tale beasts," for

these beasts, "even if they are beasts only in the figurative rather than the literal senses, turn out to be murders masquerading as civilized men" (p. 71). One task of a Gothic heroine is to distinguish wisely between the animal groom and the true beast, lest she end up maimed (physically or emotionally) or murdered.

White (1992) examines the archaeology of this "wild man" image as part of an archetypal dialectic that places wildness (along with savagery, madness, heresy, and division) in conceptual antithesis to civilization (along with humanity, sanity, orthodoxy, and unity). By projecting repressed desires and anxieties onto the image and then rejecting it as sub-human, we avoid dealing with our shadow side. The 20th century condition, he argues, is thus the by-product of habitual repression and failed attempts to solve the problems of society "through the alienation and oppression" of others (p. 36). Dudley and Novak (1992) see the fate of humanity tied up in the fate of this wild man image and our ability to confront the wilderness within. The ultimate goal to them must be to "seek a more fruitful integration of the Wild Man.... The question is still redemption or tragic destruction" (p. 313). Estes (1992) presents a similar argument for recognition and reintegration of the wildish side of women.

Burke's work on the nature of humans and Jung's work on archetype offer ways to theorize this duality. According to Burke, our nature as humans is grounded in the basic paradox of motion (the instinctive, biological aspect of the body) and action (the willful, conscious aspect of the mind) (1978). These parallel the dialectic of the "wild" man image that places wildness and civilization in antithesis. Jung's

(1956) constructs of the Unconscious and the Conscious also parallel the Motion-Action construct. Burke and Jung's basic argument as to the effect of this duality follows: All other dualities are by-products of this basic dualistic nature. As we learn language, we become conscious of our selves as a potential Self and can act willfully and consciously within the bounds of our community. But through this consciousness, we lose the innocence of motion, our ability to live in the present moment, our sense of oneness with the uboric force of nature. We are at once driven ahead to forge a unique identity—a mature Self and driven back to the oneness of the womb of mother and community. The drive to Self is the drive to fulfilling our humanity, but to arrive there we must undergo the process of individuation in order to come to terms with the community and thence to "fulfill the peculiarity" of our own nature (Jung, 1956, p. 182). This process is mediated symbolically in archetypal stories which give us the resources to address other dualities within, dualities of masculine and feminine, of Shadow and Self. The process of maturing into a full Self is a complex and life-long process, requiring mindfulness of our own individuality as well as recognition and respect of the individuality of other. Equally as demanding, we must come to terms with the Other inside our Self, for our Shadow, which lies yet in our unconscious, can distract and destroy us (Castillejo, 1973).

Burke and Jung both argue that, ironically, our only means to transcend the paradox of our Animal-Human (Motion-Action, Unconscious-Conscious) natures is the very means through which we become trapped within it. As action-driven creatures,

we are constantly involved in the symbolic creation and interpretation of the world around us. We have the power to change this constructed reality but are so constrained by learned patterns, scripts, and schemas of our communities that we seldom recognize the fluidity of what surrounds us nor do we expend much effort toward reconstruction. Instead, we accept the reification of once-flexible structures into immutable truths. Society becomes dehumanized and fixed "as a non-human, non-humanizable, inert facility" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 89). The potential for Self is thus often lost in the habitualized self-in-community, an institutionalized version of motion in which the actions of the self are habitualized and unmindful. It is this symbolic level of the paradox of motion and action as they are replicated in the habituated self-in-community versus the mindful, aware Self that is most important to understanding who we are as humans. This distinction is most important in analyzing B&tB, as it is the symbolic animal-human paradox between the submerged self-in-community and the emerging Self of Belle and Beast that dominates the plotline.

Cycles of Separation and Redemption

In the process of individuation, we struggle to separate our self from our community and to stand first independently and then interdependently as unique Selves. But this comes with a price, according to Burke. As we emerge as a unique being, we realize that we are separated from others and ultimately separated from the unity of the cosmos. Burke argues that we experience this separation as an internal tension between the perfection of Order (or community) and the flawed

reality of a limited self. He labels this tension Guilt (1968, p. 450); it is often played out as anxiety, embarrassment, self-hatred, or disgust. We yearn for something to compensate for this separation, for a consubstantiality that reunites the divided parts of self, society, and spirit. Our actions—the dramas of our lives—are attempts to "compensate for division" and seek Redemption back into unity. We must resolve the dilemma of separation if we are to healthfully mature. Resolution does not necessarily guarantee maturity, however, according to Burke, as can be seen in the contrast between the two different means of reconciliation we try out: tragic cycles and comedic cycles.

The tragic approach to resolve duality is to exaggerate and then eliminate either one or the other aspect of it. Burke describes this inherently tragic approach as cathartic; it provides a temporary release of tension only (1966, p. 189). Tragedy is firmly centered in the motional, self-in-community aspect of consciousness (Burke, 1984; Sheard, 1993). In this ego-based, power-over attempt to conquer duality, unity is achieved via purification, either through victimage (punishing a scapegoat) or through mortification (self-inflicted punishment). These tragic means to symbolic unity are inherently limiting and destructive. Duality is overcome only through the elimination of one pole or the other and thus the unity achieved is more mind-trick than actuality.

In the comedic approach, redemption from division is sought by using a more Zen Buddhist logic of both/and to resolve and transcend the dualities. From this more soulful, power-with perspective, we achieve unity by finding a higher order structure that allows the poles of a duality to co-exist (Carlson,

1986; Rybacki & Rybacki, 1995). Such "true transcendence is open to human choice," but in our confusion of independence and interdependence, we fear to exercise such choice lest our separate egoic self be lost (Rushing, 1985, p. 191).

One method of getting a handle on these dramas of unity is through studying the clustering of terms to describe them (Burke, 1968). The first step is to identify the dominant images that cluster in association with one another and in opposition to one another (Burke, 1973; Berthold, 1976). The next step is to examine the cycles of tragedy and comedy that hold the clusters together, set them apart, or unite them in a larger whole. Through these, one can thus gain the "perspective by incongruity" which emerges through pulling the dialectical pairs together, identifying the tension and dissonance which results, and then identifying the larger universe which transcends the two (Rasmussen, 1994). For the analysis of B&tB, this means searching for terms and metaphors that capture the images of animal and human and then examining the dramatic action for the tragic and comedic means toward resolution.

Reading Beauty and the Beast: The Animal (Motion) Cluster

Beast sets the center of the cluster of terms related to having an Animal nature, serving as a vortex of identification with the motifs of Ugliness, Captivity, and Nonthinking. The most obvious associations are directly physical and closely linked with Ugliness—he is "hideous" with a "monstrous form," "huge" with a "long ugly snout" and "sharp cruel teeth." More subtle are the personality traits linked with existence at such an unconscious, unaware level.

Beast's physical form is a direct product of his psychic form. He was "spoiled, selfish, and unkind," and he had "no love in his heart" ("Narrator's Prologue"). Belle's first assessment of him as a monster also introduces the Thinking-Nonthinking cluster, as she calls him an unthinking fool and demands that he "think again" ("Home"). Beast later echoes Belle's perspective in his realization that he is "careless and unthinking" and that "deep within is utter blindness." With this comes the recognition that, if he can't learn to love Belle, he is lost forever to the powers of beauty and goodness ("If I Can't"). Reading provides another metaphor for his lack of Thinking, as reading was something he did "only a little and long ago." A lack of emotional control also shows an inability to Think—he roars and bellows, slams doors, and throws furniture about. Finally, Beast is associated with a Captivity-Freedom cluster. Beast doesn't hesitate to capture Maurice and then later Belle, who knows that she doesn't deserve to be "shut away from the world" and held in "this tragic place" ("Home"). Beast too is trapped—in his beastly form. He sees "no comfort, no escape . . . from [his] tortured shape" ("If I Can't").

The other major carrier of the Animal motif is Gaston, who mirrors Beast's character. While the story ends with Beast integrating his Human side to achieve a fuller sense of Self, it begins with Gaston introduced as the epitome of (hu)manhood. The Beauty and Freedom clusters are closely linked with Gaston, but with interesting ironies. As "the greatest hunter in the whole world," his goal is to control everyone and everything. "No beast alive stands a chance against [him] . . . and no girl for that matter." To the

villagers, he is both ladies' man ("he's such a tall, dark, strong, and handsome brute") and man's man ("for there's no man in town half as manly"). This image of perfected humanity, however, fails to hold for Gaston's beauty is twisted: the fact that "every last inch of [him's] covered with hair" foreshadows a beastliness behind the physical beauty. His power is also strongly egoic. He has no honor in dealing with women, promising the "silly girls" that his fun with them won't change just because he gets married. This lack of honor applies to his dealing with men, too. He relies on intimidation to get what he wants and if he must fight, he bites and spits in order to win. Gaston too is proof that appearances can be deceiving: if "beauty is found within," Gaston is surely a beast. His personality shows him, at best, to be "boorish" and "brainless." He is closely associated with Non-thinking. He doesn't read (a sign of Non-thinking), and when he picks up Belle's book, he seems to search only for a centerfold. Thinking for him is a "dangerous pastime" rather than a means of enlightenment. As the only purpose of thinking for Gaston is to plan evil schemes, Nonthinking is closely associated with Captivity. As if to a hunted animal, he boasts "Escape me, there's no way/Certain as do re/ Belle, when you marry/Me!? ("Me"). He is also vindictive: when Belle turns down his marriage proposal, he turns to revenge, plotting to imprison Maurice and so force Belle's hand. When even this plan fails, he redirects his attention to an attack on the castle and Beast. He challenges Beast, making fun of his human aspects ("What's the matter, Beast? Too kind and gentle to fight back?") and again reducing Belle to a mere trophy ("Were you in love with her, Beast? Did you honestly think

she'd want you when she had someone like me?").

The Human (Action) Cluster

In contrast to the Animal cluster of terms in B&tB is the cluster around being Human. To be centered in motion in this tale links one with Ugliness, Captivity, and Nonthinking. To be centered in action links one with Beauty, Freedom, and Thinking. To the villagers, the combination of these three begets a fourth: Oddity. From the opening song, Belle is linked with all four clusters, particularly Oddity, and thus sets the mark for the Humanity motif. The villagers point out 18 times that Belle is "strange," "peculiar," and "rather odd," mainly because she reads and is independent. She's "never part of any crowd/cause her head's up on some cloud" ("Belle"). It isn't easy for Belle to dismiss the villagers, who feel that Belle is "nothing like the rest of us" and who assert that "it's a pity and a sin, she doesn't quite fit in" ("Belle"). She is torn by the paradox between fitting in and finding herself. The only positive trait for which the villagers recognize her is physical beauty. Even Gaston is determined to "woo and marry Belle" because she's the only one in town "who's as beautiful as me." But he too has reservations about her reading, telling her "The whole town is talking about it–it's not right for a woman to read. Soon she starts getting ideas ... and thinking. ..." Only the bookseller and her father seem to recognize the full beauty of Belle. Maurice reassures her that "you are unique: crème de la crème" ("No Matter What"). This is not enough for Belle. Her reading has, indeed, led her to Thinking and so she yearns for "more than this provincial life." The domestic life, as described by Gaston, is not for her,

a rejection which is affirming for the women in the audience who do not spend their lives "hoping, scheming just one theme: Will you be a wife? Will you be some he-man's property." With Belle, they too can reject a life in which their role is defined by their ability to "extend the family tree" and to keep "house with pride" as someone's "little wife" ("Me"). The "idyllic scene" which Gaston offers is anything but for Belle. She wants adventure as well as someone with whom to share it.

As a Thinking person, though, her yearning is not totally surprising; after all, the books that she reads are full of archetypal myths. These myths are pointers to what Jung calls the "collective unconscious," that aspect of Self that mediates symbolically between consciousness and unconsciousness and whose goal is to guide us to maturity (1970, p. 3–4). In them, Belle finds archetypes for fighting injustice, even against an overwhelming opponent (Jack and the Beanstalk); for seeing beyond the surface (in the book read at the well); for strength in one's oddities (Arthur); and for courage, perseverance, and depth of feeling (Guinevere). It is perhaps these myths that give her the insight to make her own choices and to take the risks that reveal and develop the beauty of her personality. Even Beast is touched by her offer to take her father's place as a prisoner: "You . . . you would do that?" he asks in a puzzled tone. Belle's power allows her to turn Captivity into Freedom. She realizes that even though she may be a prisoner physically, she will never be wholly captured: "Build higher walls around me/Change every lock and key/Nothing lasts, nothing holds/All of me. My heart's far, far away/home and free" ("Home"). When Beast loses his temper at Belle's entering the West

Wing, she wisely knows that choices can be changed and flees the castle. When Beast realizes his foolishness in driving her away and comes after her, he ends up rescuing her from wolves. When he collapses from his wounds, she has an opportunity to flee to freedom, but realizing that dishonor brings its own cage, she reaches out in compassion and rescues him, returning him to the castle.

Clearly, she is not the typical Disney fairy tale princess–she is the stuff of which Gothic heroines are made. Belle's beauty carries with it a boldness of action that reflects her internal strength. When her father is missing, she rides out to find him and then chooses to take his place with the beast. She rescues Beast, confronts him on his own turf, and then rides her horse into the castle to aid him in his battle against Gaston. And, though all of this, she has no fear of looking disheveled–with hair wet and clothes bedraggled, her Beauty isn't the kind that washes away. She matches her boldness with grace: she complements the objects in the castle; she drinks from her bowl at dinner to prevent Beast from feeling foolish because he can't use silverware; and, when she discovers he can't read, saves him from embarrassment by proclaiming the book she has selected is the "perfect book to read aloud." The choice of the book also highlights the shift in their relationship–it is the tale of Arthur and Guinevere.

Managing the Tension of the Animal-Human Paradox

The characters themselves set the opposing clusters of the Animal-Human paradox in B&tB, as one would expect in a Gothic romance. The heroine is the touchstone of the humanity cluster; the romantic lead is initially

associated with the animality cluster, but grows into his humanity; and the romantic second is initially identified with the humanity cluster, but is discovered to be evil and manipulative and thus part of the animal cluster (Bowman, 1983). With these clusters identified, we can now turn to uncovering the strategies the characters use to resolve the tension between the two aspects of their natures. We need to see how the characters attempt to enter the cycle of redemption through which Belle is to grow into herself, Beast is to be transformed into humanity, and Gaston is to be discovered as evil and manipulative (and thus a beast).

Victimage. For Gaston and Beast, their first choices for managing the dialectical tension are a by-product of the excessive influences of their animal aspects. Both attempt to resolve duality through scapegoating and then eliminating whatever has created the tension. For them, relationships are of the I-It quality—and as we discover with Beast, if one treats people like "its" or objects long enough, eventually that is what they become.

Until Belle came along, Gaston existed quite well. His feelings of separateness were met by an ego response to dominate others (most especially Lefou, who serves as lackey and whipping post). Belle's refusal of Gaston was Unthinkable—literally. It creates a crisis of separation for him that progressively calls out more beastly aspects. He degenerates into full victimage in an attempt to set things "right" again. His Shadow self slowly takes over as his higher Self is lost to rage. To Gaston, victimizing Maurice to force Belle's hand is a just punishment for thwarting his desires. When this fails, Gaston turns on Belle, restraining himself only at the last moment from hitting her

when she marks the reversal of roles between he and Beast, speaking the unspeakable: "He's not the monster, Gaston. You are!" In the mob scene that follows, the villagers get caught up in Gaston's scapegoating and accept without examination the charges that the Beast "will wreak havoc on our village/If we let him wander free." The villagers give insight into their own limits in this scene and demonstrate the process of victimage well as they declare: "We don't like what we don't understand/In fact, it scares us/And this monster is mysterious at least. . . . We'll save our village and our lives/We'll kill the beast!" Gaston, of course, feeds this process, for this mania allows him to manipulate those around him as the villagers submerge any individuated Self in the self-in-community. They create an illusion of action, while operating under such a low level of consciousness that it mimics motion. They surrender reason and humanity, mindlessly joining forces to destroy the unknown Beast. In the assault on the castle, Gaston's cowardice outs as he twice attacks Beast from behind, ultimately striking a mortal blow after he had been defeated and set free by Beast. The resolution of his anger comes in a tragic frame as he slips and falls from the castle to his death.

From Victimage to Mortification. Beast too chooses victimization as his first tool against Guilt or Separation. His treatment of the beggar woman and then later Maurice shows an attack mode when threat is felt. This is also shown in his abusive interactions with his servants and, to start, with Belle. He blames his condition on a "cruel trick of fate" based on "one careless, wrong decision" ("How long"). When Belle models a different approach, grounded in compassion, courage, and

honor, he is caught up short. It is obvious that no one except the enchantress had ever called him to account for his behavior. Belle shines light on his Shadow self and invites him to come to terms with it. When she runs away, he ends up, unintentionally, doing a truly good deed by rescuing her at his own cost. When she thanks him, he seems surprised to realize what he has done, and his "You're welcome" carries his first appropriately placed sense of graciousness. This change allows him to move from victimage to mortification, a process that requires that he shoulder responsibility for his actions, to accept and integrate his dark side. This is poignantly shown as he examines himself and sees "not the slightest trace/of anything that even hints of kindness." He realizes that "long ago I should have seen/All the things I could have been/Careless and unthinking I move onward ("If I can't"). In his wretchedness, he surrenders to hopelessness at the seeming impossibility of learning to love and of having that love returned.

From Mortification to Transcendence. Once Belle returns to the castle after their mutual rescues, Belle and Beast negotiate new ways of being in relationship. The day they play in the snow reveals a vision of what is needed to overcome the animal-human paradox. Belle begins to realize that her "seeing" wasn't fully developed–that "there's something in him/That I simply didn't see ... there's something sweet and almost kind about him" ("Something There"). This marks a shift in perception typical of the re-visioning of the Strong-Male lead in Gothic novels (Modleski, 1982). Atypically, though, the change is not just in Belle's perception. In B&tB, the change is in both Belle and Beast. True, to break

the spell, *she* must be aware of the changes in him and thus come to love him, but *he* must come to "find love in his heart" ("Narrator's prologue") and choose to reach out to another in love.

The potential for Beast's transformation appears early on: he is aware enough to be touched by Belle's choice to stand in for her father as captive and later to realize he had done something noble in rescuing her. Beast's conscious awareness of another comes as he sees clues from Belle that he might be lovable: "She glanced this way, I thought I saw/And when we touched she didn't shudder at my paw." He is tentative and self-doubting, "but then she never looked at me that way before." With this shift, we see the mystery that occurs when one person's transformation becomes supportive of another's. Belle's willingness to see and Beast's openness to love occur in parallel. He marks his change by giving her a highly symbolic gift: a library full of books. This gift validates her bent toward Thinking and serves to validate for the audience Belle's unconventional traits. It also shows Beast's growing ability to think relationally, choosing a gift that would be meaningful to Belle, rather than "flowers, chocolates, or promises you don't intend to keep." Belle matches his gift with a gift of her own, born of the collective unconscious. By reading to him, she models how to use what had lain within his own castle (and himself) all along, accessible but unaccessed by him. By reading the Arthurian romance, she offers an archetype of the dignity of the human spirit. This leads to a discussion of her "oddity" in the eyes of the villagers, a self-disclosure which models empathy and identification with Beast as well as a growing acceptance of her own uniqueness. Ironically, Belle has

now found someone who can give the understanding that she longed for in the village. The interplay of gifts to Self and Other is also played out in the dinner and ballroom scenes. For the first time, Beast dresses as a gentleman and walks the stairs rather than leaping the banisters. The title song, which functions as a "chorus" to the scene, shows the process of their growth toward one another: "Barely even friends/Then somebody bends unexpectedly ... Bittersweet and strange/Finding you can change/Learning you were wrong." It also shows the interplay of dualities in the growing relationship, blending the motifs of Animality in the immutable patterns of nature ("certain as the sun/rising in the east") and of Humanity in the archetypes of the collective unconscious ("Tale as old as time/Song as old as rhyme"). Animal and Human are joined in the tag line: "Beauty and the Beast."

Transformation is not so easily accomplished, however. Before the final resolution of duality can take place, Beast must choose to release Belle, believing that in so doing he is sacrificing himself to remain a beast forever (thus her sacrifice for her father is matched by his sacrifice for her). This marks half of the Action needed to break the spell. Belle needs time and distance to realize her seeing is true and that she loves Beast despite his beastly appearance. Only then does she enter the relationship out of Freedom rather than Captivity. In the final scene, Belle notes the extent of her transformation, kneeling beside the dying Beast: "Don't you know how you've changed me? Strange how I finally see" ("Transformation"). This marks the second half of the Action needed to break the spell. As she looks away from him in grief, the spell breaks and

a physical transformation begins to match the psychic transformations that have already occurred. Oddly, this final physical transformation seems superfluous, and many viewers of the film and musical express disappointment in the Prince, not because the Prince is in himself a disappointment, but rather because they too had recognized the inner change in Beast and discovered a beauty in his beastly exterior. Hearne (1989) notes a similar disappointment in her experience of Marianna and Mercer Mayer's (1978) illustrated *Beauty and the Beast,* the only other version in which Beast must himself transform within in order to become human again.

As Beast transforms, so do all of their surroundings, including the objects, for the full humanization of any one of us makes us all more fully human. These transformations do not negate either the Animal aspects or the Human aspects of Beast or Belle, but rather unify them into a transcendent whole of two Selves in a mature and loving relationship. As Beast's transformation into the Prince is complete, his first words demonstrate the presence of both natures in him: "Belle, look into my eyes. Belle, don't you recognize the Beast within the man who's here before you?" ("Transformation"). In keeping with the motif of growth, Belle and Beast's final duet suggests not an ending but a continuing in which duality and unity co-exist because of love: "Two lives have begun now, two hearts become one now: One passion, one dream, one thing forever true ... I love you."

Conclusions

Most readings of "Beauty and the Beast" have relied heavily on the animal-human paradox. In Victorian era

interpretations, Beauty was idealized womankind, who as possessor of gentility and purity had the duty of rescuing Beast, as animalistic mankind, from this earthy wild nature (Hasting, 1988). In more worldly readings, Beauty had to come to terms with the animal nature of Beast. He would become human because of her acceptance of his nature (Bettelheim, 1977). Wholeness here comes through changing one's lenses rather than transforming one's nature (Ralph, 1986). Hearne (1989) took an important step forward in her more transformative reading of the tale. To her, Beauty models a different process of maturation, one that unifies the two aspects of human nature and finds wholeness within one's self. This more balanced reading stems from the "fearful knowledge that we are each beastly, juxtaposed with the hopeful knowledge that we are each beautiful . . . and can be acceptable, even lovable, to another human being" (p. 133). Only when we come to terms with the duality within ourselves, Hearne claims, are we ready to reach out one to another as partners in a growing relationship. Even this reading has limits though, in that it focused on Beauty's growth, with Beast as catalyst. Beast is presumably fully human, except in appearance, so his primary test is of patience, not growth.

Woolverton's take on the story, though, moves forward yet another step for she offers a reading which centers the growth in both parties: the spell cannot be broken through a single agency. Belle and Beast are both required to be transformed, each as the agency for the other. No longer do we have the mature, if rough-exteriored, male mentoring a beautiful, naïve female into relational (and sexual) matu-

rity, but two humans seeking within for the maturity they lack so they may then reach out to build an adult relationship. For Belle, the maturity she seeks calls for acceptance of her thinking self as well as more sensitive powers of perception and intuition; for Beast, he must discover a capacity for love (a more developed and positive "anima" aspect of action). Both must learn to look beyond Self to Other, moving from an immature selfishly focused level of individuation to a Self-centering, yet Other-involving mature individuation. They must discover interdependence rather than dependence or dominance. This expands the Gothic formula in an intriguing way. No longer is it the female's role to single-handedly identify who are the "real men" (strong, but not brutalizing) and free them into expressing their tenderer side, but both male *and* female must free themselves by uniting their thinking and feeling sides. They must find love within and then reach out to support the transformation of the other.

"The meaning of a text is always the site of a struggle" (Grossberg, 1983, p. 86), and this text is no different. Freymiller (1996) reads B&tB as an anti-feminist romance that offers new roles, yet ultimately undercuts them. Jeffords (1995) reads it as a struggle between hyper-masculinity and pseudo-masculinity (a reading based on picture book presentations rather than the film or musical itself). Farrell (1993) reads it with a Marxist eye as a class struggle between the peasantry (working class) and the aristocracy (corporate America) of post-modern society. While these readings may provide some insights, they don't explain what draws audiences en masse to see *Disney's Beauty and the Beast*. Placing B&tB within the

context of Gothic romance, however, offers a path for understanding the text from a gendered perspective, but with the option that its popularity relies on these multiple readings. Some audiences may be attracted to the possibility of a patriarchal romance in which traditional womanhood and manhood prevails. Other audiences may be responding to an alternate reading in which this fantasy is "subversively rather than overtly political" (Walker, 1990, p. 9) as it reappropriates the traditional motifs, "exaggerating the ironies, the absurdities, of contemporary sexism" (p. 12) and validating Belle's unconventional characteristics. The happy ending for the readers of this alternate fantasy comes from their secret enjoyment at the dismantling of the traditional roles coupled with their open pleasure in seeing played out before them a postmodern model for relationships.

As a Gothic romance, B&tB thus is available to function as a mode of therapeutic rhetoric that "describes psychological problems and offers prescriptive remedies" to each audience member (Payne, 1989, p. 38). Payne illustrates how therapeutic rhetoric can work with his analysis of the *Wizard of Oz.* The ultimate purpose of that quest, he argues, was development of an individuated self. B&tB takes the quest a step further, using self-formation as grounding for fulfilling and functional intimate relationships in a way similar to the "equal-marriage novel" that Pratt describes (1981). This new quest also

adds a variation to Hubbard's visions of romance (1985). She found that romance novels of the 1980s reflected feminist ideals, with independence for the female and a balance of social and task roles for both male and female. Control of the relationship, though, rested "squarely on the shoulders of the female" (p. 309). In the vision B&tB offers for the 1990s, the balancing of roles is taken further. Both male and female must address the dialectical aspects of their personalities, reach beyond themselves, and come together into relationship. That the spell could not be broken by just the action of Belle also provides a step forward for the Gothic genre and offers a hopeful reading for women who are tired of holding the emotional responsibility for their relationships.

Belle and Beast model the growth of Self that is required to avoid the trap of mindless tradition. They each find a balancing of the Animal and Human aspects without losing either masculine or feminine energy. Belle combines deep intuition with firm self-assertion; Beast merges his strength with tenderness and relational responsibility. This contemporary fairy tale encourages us to discover what it means to have two fully individuated Selves coming together in openness and collaboration, to open our minds to the possibilities of naming both the Beauty and the Beast within so that the relationship between Beauty and Beast without may flourish.   □

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